



Book Publishing

ROBERT W. FRASE

PLANNING AHEAD FOR LIBRARY SERVICE in the next two decades requires the assessment of three factors—the number and nature of readers to be served, the volume and kinds of materials to be made available to those readers, and the price of the various component costs of library service. The following analysis of book publication concentrates upon the possible future volume of book title production and to a lesser extent upon book prices. Size of population and rate of population growth or decline probably have some effect upon the number of book titles published in individual countries, but the relationship is not a direct one and is virtually impossible to measure.

Of all the types of library materials, books seem to lend themselves best to an attempt to project the future on the basis of past trends. In this field consistent and comprehensive statistics compiled on United States title production by *Publishers' Weekly* extend over a period of many years. The international title production statistics assembled by UNESCO for a large number of countries are less complete and less consistent, but they are adequate for indicating general trends.

The *Publishers' Weekly* count of U.S. title production includes books of all types containing 49 pages or more. Prior to 1958 the lower page limit was 65, but it was reduced at that time to conform to the international standard suggested by UNESCO. Textbooks, reference books, monographs, and other kinds of nonperiodical publications are included in addition to trade books, regardless of whether the publisher is a regular commercial firm, a university press, or an institution entirely outside the publishing field. There are, however, certain major exclusions from the count, usually materials which do not ordinarily flow through the customary distribution channels of the book trade. Most important of the excluded materials are most

Mr. Frase is Associate Managing Director, American Book Publishers Council.

ROBERT W. FRAZE

publications of federal, state, and local governments, books produced under author subsidy by a "vanity press," and dissertations.¹

Table I, which follows, shows the actual volume of book titles (new books plus new and revised editions) reported by *Publishers' Weekly* for the years 1951 and 1960 and a projection of the trend line during this period to the year 1980.

TABLE I
U.S. Book Title Production
1951, 1960 and Projected to 1980

<i>Classification</i>	<i>1951 Actual</i>	<i>1960 Actual</i>	<i>1980 Projected</i>
Agriculture, Gardening.....	150	156	180
Biography.....	639	879	1,400
Business.....	260	305	650
Education.....	273	348	530
Fiction.....	2,135	2,440	4,000
Fine Arts.....	307	470	1,150
Games, Sports.....	174	286	500
General Literature and Criticism.....	531	736	1,600
Geography, Travel.....	286	466	1,000
History.....	523	865	2,500
Home Economics.....	227	197	200
Juvenile.....	1,072	1,725	4,000
Law.....	282	394	550
Medicine, Hygiene.....	478	520	690
Music.....	96	98	130
Philology.....	190	228	250
Philosophy, Ethics.....	338	480	1,000
Poetry, Drama.....	487	492	500
Religion.....	731	1,104	2,400
Science.....	722	1,089	3,500
Sociology, Economics.....	506	754	1,500
Technical and Military Books.....	411	698	1,200
Miscellaneous.....	437	282	400
Totals.....	11,255	15,012	29,830
Projection of Totals.....			26,000

SOURCE: Actual figures for 1951 and 1960 are as reported by *Publishers' Weekly* and do not include most federal, state, and local government publications. Projections for 1980 are by the author, based upon the 1951-1960 trends. The 29,830 figure in 1980 is the sum of projections of the extended series. The 26,000 figure is the projection of the trend of the total.

As indicated in Table I, if the 1951-60 steady upward trend is continued, there will be somewhere between 26,000 and 30,000 book titles published in the United States in 1980, an increase of between 66 per cent and 100 per cent over 1960. An increase in title production of this magnitude is based upon the assumption that the current trend will continue. It would be reasonable, therefore, to assume a projection of this rate of increase as a basis for library planning until

Book Publishing

the trend line changes significantly. Libraries do not buy all titles which are published, but it may be assumed that they purchase a fairly constant proportion of new and revised editions in the fields in which they maintain collections. For individual libraries and types of libraries, a more refined method of planning for the future would be to use the trends of title production for individual classifications of books in proportion to their importance in the collection rather than using total title production.

Especially for university and research libraries, foreign materials are as important as domestic. The following Table II, compiled from UNESCO sources, gives a rough indication of the trends of book and pamphlet title production in a large group of foreign countries:

TABLE II
*Book and Pamphlet Title
Production in 31 Foreign Countries
1950, 1959 and Projected to 1980*

<i>Country</i>	<i>1950</i>	<i>1959</i>	<i>Projected to 1980</i>
European Countries (19).....	76,464	96,403	—
Asian Countries (5).....	33,609	39,423	—
U. S. S. R.....	43,100	69,072	—
Other Countries (6).....	5,821	6,064	—
Total (31).....	158,994	210,962	369,000

SOURCE: UNESCO, *Basic Facts and Figures (1960)*, and *Book Production 1937-1954, 1957*.

The 31 countries in Table II were chosen because both 1950 and 1959 figures were available in UNESCO reports. Although the sample of countries is sufficiently large for statistical purposes, it may not include enough Asian, African, and Latin American countries for projections because future increases in title production will be larger in these areas than in the established book publishing countries of Europe. The data presented in Table II are not as comparable as the *Publishers' Weekly* figures for the United States because the definitions from which these statistics were compiled may have changed during the last decade. It should also be noted that the figures are not directly comparable with those of the United States because books, pamphlets, and government documents are included in most of these countries in some undefined proportion, while in the U.S.

neither pamphlets nor most federal, state, and local documents are counted.

However, with these caveats, the data are indicative of the trend outside the United States. From 1950 to 1959 the increase for these 31 countries is 33 per cent. A projected increase from 1959 to 1980 comes to about 75 per cent. These figures are remarkably similar to those shown in Table I for United States book title production.

In planning for the future, libraries must consider the physical volume and cost of materials which they need to acquire. Pioneering work based upon the conceptions of W. H. Kurth of the National Library of Medicine has been done on the trend of American book and periodical prices since 1947 by the Committee on Cost of Library Materials Index of the American Library Association. The basic date for both books and periodicals is available in various published sources, including the *American Library and Book Trade Annual*,² and the 1961 edition of *Health, Education, and Welfare Trends*.³ In addition, the U.S. Office of Education published a monograph on this subject by F. L. Schick and W. H. Kurth.⁴ The A.L.A. committee is also endeavoring to encourage other countries to compile similar indexes of book and periodical prices, but to date only Mexican and Danish book price figures are available.

The A.L.A. book price index showed a change in the average prices of book titles included from 100 in the base period of 1947-49 to 146.2 in 1960. The books included in the index are generally hard-cover books of the types purchased by libraries and do not include paperbacks, reprint editions, encyclopaedias, and most textbooks. These exclusions make the index rise more rapidly than were it based upon all books published in the United States. The increasing proportion of paperback books in the total title production (and even more in the total number of copies sold) has a tendency to lower average prices. Nevertheless, for library budgeting purposes, the index is properly designed and extremely useful.

The projection of the 1947-1960 trend of the book price index or any of its component parts to the year 1980 would be of questionable validity and dubious value. Book prices, like salaries and other library costs, tend to keep pace with the general price level and if the inflationary trend of the postwar period continues, book prices will undoubtedly also rise. Of more importance in library planning are the basic physical quantities involved—the number of people to be served and the volume of materials needed to provide this service. Once

Book Publishing

these are determined, budget planning for acquisition can take place on an annual or a biennial basis in terms of the most recent information on price trends.

In the past there existed special problems relating to the acquisition of out-of-print books—those which can no longer be obtained from their publishers. The price of these books has varied according to the original published price, available supply and demand, and related factors. It seems likely that if authorized by their publisher, American titles not in heavy demand but still under copyright will be made available through xerox copies or similar processes. This source of supply may result in fewer price variations than previously encountered. Out-of-print titles in heavier demand may appear as new or revised editions in cloth or as paperbacks. In this format they are included in the general projections of title production in Table I.

Summary

The number of individual book titles has been increasing steadily in the postwar period both in the United States and in other countries. If this trend continues, something on the order of 66 to 100 per cent more book titles will be published in 1980 than in 1960. Book prices have also been rising in the past decade in accordance with the slow inflationary trend of the entire economy. In the planning of library service over the next two decades, these factors need to be taken into account along with demographic trends.

References

1. Wright, W. E., ed.: *Book Production in 64 Countries. American Library and Book Trade Annual, 1960 Edition*, New York, R. R. Bowker, 1961, p. 47.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
3. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: *Health, Education, and Welfare Trends*. 1961 ed. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961, pp. 58-59.
4. Schick, F. L., and Kurth, W. H.: *Cost of Library Materials: Price Trends of Publications*. Washington, D.C., U.S. Office of Education, 1961.